



An Axiological Study of Kembang Kerang Woven Fabric: The Existence of Aesthetic, Ethical, and Practical Values in Local Culture

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Abstract

This study examined the axiological dimensions of *Kembang Kerang* woven fabric, focusing on its aesthetic, ethical, and practical values within the context of local culture. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research involved field observations, in-depth interviews with local weavers, and visual analysis of woven patterns. The findings revealed that the aesthetic value of *Kembang Kerang* lies in its intricate motifs, harmonious color combinations, and symbolic patterns that reflect cultural identity. Ethically, the weaving tradition fosters a sense of communal responsibility, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and the preservation of indigenous heritage. From a practical perspective, the fabric serves as both a cultural artifact and an economic commodity, contributing to the livelihoods of local artisans. The study concluded that the *Kembang Kerang* woven fabric embodies a holistic integration of beauty, moral significance, and functionality, ensuring its continued relevance in contemporary society.

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Introduction

Traditional woven fabrics constitute an inseparable part of the rich cultural heritage of the Indonesian archipelago, encompassing aesthetic, social, and spiritual values. One such cultural legacy is *kembang kerang* woven cloth, a distinctive creation of the Lombok Island community that embodies symbolic meanings and the life philosophy of the Sasak people. In the socio-cultural context, *kembang kerang* weaving is not merely perceived as a material product; rather, it represents the values embedded in the daily life of the community, including aesthetic, economic, cultural identity, as well as spiritual and religious dimensions (Putrajip et al., 2024).

From a philosophical perspective, the interpretation of the values embedded in cultural objects such as woven cloth can be examined through the lens of axiology—a branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of value, encompassing ethical, aesthetic, and other value dimensions that shape meaning (Rescher, 1969; Hartmann, 1961). The axiological examination of *kembang kerang* weaving is particularly relevant because, beyond its role as a cultural artifact, it serves as a medium of expression for local identity and values, which are continually transformed through interactions with the forces of modernity and globalization (Appadurai, 1986; Hall, 1997).



Amidst the currents of globalization and cultural commodification, there is a growing concern that the noble values embedded in *kembang kerang* weaving may be eroded and replaced by market-oriented priorities (Situngkir, 2015). Yet, the meaning of woven cloth cannot be separated from its cultural and historical context. It is therefore essential to understand how the community interprets the fabric, how the creative and production processes are carried out, and how the cloth functions within the social and spiritual life of the people. An axiological study of *kembang kerang* weaving offers a reflective space for examining the local values underlying its existence, and how those values persist, transform, or even vanish in the dynamics of changing times.

Furthermore, such inquiry is crucial to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage recognized at both national and international levels. An axiological approach enriches perspectives in formulating value-based cultural preservation policies, while also supporting strategies for empowering local communities by strengthening cultural values within the practices of the creative economy (Ulfa et al., 2023; Yoso, 2023). Accordingly, this article aims to investigate the axiological values inherent in *kembang kerang* woven cloth using a qualitative approach that integrates literature analysis and field data.

Materials and Methods

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretative orientation, aiming to understand the axiological values embedded in the practices and symbolism of Kembang Kerang woven fabric in Lombok. This approach enables the researcher to explore the social, cultural, and philosophical meanings attributed by the local community to this traditional weaving product. Qualitative research was chosen because it aligns with the need to comprehend social and cultural phenomena within a complex and contextual framework (Creswell, 2013).

The research model applied is an interpretative ethnographic study, adapting the axiology theory from the philosophy of science, which emphasizes utility values, moral values, and aesthetic values within a cultural entity (Kaelan, 2010). In this context, Kembang Kerang woven fabric is not only understood as a material artifact but also as a medium for expressing cultural values and local identity. Furthermore, this study also refers to the theory of local culture and local wisdom as developed by Geertz (1973), which views culture as a meaningful symbolic system.

Data collection techniques include participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted in weaving production centers in Kembang Kerang, East Lombok Regency, with the aim of observing the weaving production process, social interactions among weavers, and the accompanying cultural context. In-depth interviews were carried out with key informants, namely weavers, weaving business owners, traditional leaders, and local cultural activists, to uncover the knowledge, values, and meanings they attribute to the Kembang Kerang woven fabric (Sugiyono, 2016). Documentation studies involved collecting photographic archives, videos, ethnographic notes, and historical documents related to the weaving tradition in the region.

The research design was arranged chronologically, starting with a preliminary exploration stage, namely field reconnaissance to determine relevant locations and subjects. The next stage was the collection of primary data through observation and interviews, conducted over approximately two months. The obtained data were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, grouping findings according to emerging axiological themes such as utility values (social and economic functions), moral values (the role of women and cultural heritage), and aesthetic values (visual and symbolic beauty of the woven fabric).

The data analysis procedure adapted the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was tested using source and method triangulation techniques, by comparing interview results with observations and documentation to ensure the consistency and credibility of the findings (McDonough & Shaw, 2012).

The hypothesis in this study is open-ended and evolves alongside the process of interpreting field data. However, it is generally assumed that the Kembang Kerang woven fabric functions not only as a craft product or economic commodity but also as a symbol of cultural identity and an expression of the social values of the Sasak community. This assumption is reinforced by previous studies emphasizing the significance of symbolic dimensions and values in local cultural products (Putrajip et al., 2024).

Overall, the methods employed in this research have been designed to be replicable by other researchers with similar methodological backgrounds. The design and procedures described refer to established and recognized scientific practices in cultural studies and qualitative research (Czichos & Saito, 2006; McDonough & Shaw, 2012).

Results and Discussions

Aesthetic Values

The Kembang Kerang woven fabric, as a representation of the material cultural heritage of the Sumbawa community, embodies distinctive aesthetic values that reflect the rich visual traditions of the local ethnic group. In this context, aesthetic values encompass elements of pattern, color, symbolism, and production techniques, which not only display visual beauty but also convey profound philosophical, historical, and social significance.

First, in terms of pattern, the Kembang Kerang woven fabric is renowned for its diverse motifs, including floral, faunal, and recurring geometric designs. Each motif carries its own meaning and serves as an identifier of the individual weaver. As explained by Supriono et al. (2021), decorative motifs in traditional textiles function not merely as ornamentation but are imbued with deep cultural symbolism. These patterns are transmitted across generations through informal learning processes, thereby ensuring the continuity of a distinctive visual tradition. From an axiological perspective, the aesthetics of these patterns possess artistic value while also serving as a medium for imparting cultural and spiritual values to the local community.

Second, the colors used in the Kembang Kerang woven fabric not only enhance its visual appeal but also hold symbolic meanings. For instance, red is often associated with courage and vitality, while black and brown reflect spiritual depth and closeness to nature. The dyes used are predominantly derived from natural sources, such as the roots of *mengkudu* and *tarum* leaves, demonstrating an adherence to principles of sustainability and local wisdom (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). This practice aligns with ecological ethics, which form an integral part of the axiological assessment of material culture.

Third, the visual symbols and meanings embedded in the Kembang Kerang woven fabric present representations of cultural narratives, myths, and the worldview of the Sumbawa people. For example, floral and shell motifs not only depict the beauty of the coastal environment but also symbolize fertility and the hope for continuity of life. As noted by Kaelan (2010), cultural symbols within traditional products serve an ideological function that reinforces the collective identity of a community.

Fourth, the production techniques of the Kembang Kerang woven fabric reflect a local aesthetic grounded in ancestral practices. The weaving process, carried out manually using non-mechanical looms (*Alat Tenun*

Bukan Mesin or ATBM), signifies a respect for slow, deliberate production processes that are imbued with meaning. This technique demonstrates a high level of skill, patience, and concentration, which, within the framework of local aesthetics, is regarded as a form of artistic achievement in itself (Spradley, 2007). Moreover, the use of the *ikat* weaving technique reflects both visual complexity and advanced technical ability, underscoring the interconnection between aesthetics and the work ethic of local weavers.

Finally, community appreciation for the beauty of the Kembang Kerang woven fabric plays a crucial role in sustaining its aesthetic value. This product is not only used in daily life but also forms an integral part of traditional ceremonies, celebrations, and markers of social status. According to Putrajip et al. (2024), the preservation of the aesthetic values of woven textiles is closely linked to the success of community-based cultural tourism management. Such appreciation reinforces the fabric's existence as a vibrant and evolving form of cultural expression.

In sum, the aesthetic values of the Kembang Kerang woven fabric are inseparable from the broader axiological framework, in which aesthetics intersect with ethics, spirituality, and cultural identity. Aesthetics, in this sense, is understood not merely as visual pleasure but as a representation of values and local knowledge, inherited across generations and continually reinterpreted within contemporary contexts.

Ethical Values

The ethical values embedded in the Kembang Kerang woven fabric reflect the moral and social principles deeply rooted in the community of its makers. The production process of this textile demands not only technical skill but also the integration of noble values such as hard work, reverence for ancestral heritage, and the prominent role of women as custodians of tradition. These values constitute an ethical framework that underpins every stage of the weaving process.

First, the most prominent moral value is diligence and perseverance. The weavers of Kembang Kerang, most of whom are women, devote several hours each day to weaving thread by thread with remarkable patience. This activity requires discipline and a high level of commitment, embodying the spirit of hard work that forms the foundation of the traditional work ethic of the Sasak community (Putrajip et al., 2024). The process also reflects cultural continuity, in which weaving skills are passed down from mothers to daughters as a form of informal family education (Hapsari, 2022).

Second, the heritage value of ancestral legacy is strongly embedded in this weaving practice. The Kembang Kerang textile is produced not solely for commercial purposes, but also as an expression of respect for the ancestors and the customary traditions that have been inherited. Weaving serves as a means of preserving traditional values and spirituality, with each motif and color selection carrying symbolic meanings associated with local narratives or communal beliefs (Koentjaraningrat, 2009).

Third, the role of women as cultural guardians is a particularly significant ethical dimension. In the context of East Lombok society, women are not only the producers of the textile but also the preservers of cultural heritage. The weaving activity provides them with an avenue to demonstrate their contributions to both the economic and cultural life of the community. This illustrates an important gender-based ethical dimension within the traditional social structure (Nugroho & Wibowo, 2022).

Beyond moral and social values, the production ethics of Kembang Kerang weaving also embrace principles of sustainability and environmental stewardship. The use of natural materials in the dyeing process and the selection of environmentally friendly threads reflect an ecological consciousness in traditional production. The

weavers, through generational practice, maintain a balance between production needs and environmental preservation, embodying the principles of ecological ethics (Yuliana & Rusli, 2022).

The value of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) is also integral to the ethical framework of this craft. Within the weaving community, mutual assistance in preparing looms, spinning yarn, or organizing product distribution forms part of a collective ethos that strengthens social solidarity. This cooperative practice not only expedites production but also fosters stronger social bonds within the community (Rahardjo, 1985).

In sum, the ethical values of the Kembang Kerang woven fabric encompass moral, social, ecological, and gender dimensions that shape the entirety of this cultural practice. These values are not only the foundation of its production process but also a vital narrative in understanding the fabric as a sustainable and dignified cultural product. The Kembang Kerang textile, with all its ethical dimensions, stands as tangible evidence of how traditional cultural practices can address the challenges of modernity through a strong commitment to moral principles and social responsibility.

Transformation and Contemporary Context

Wayang Ukur Panakawan is not merely a re-presentation of traditional cultural values, but an actualization of those values within a contemporary context. This performance seeks to address the challenges of modernity and social change through the transformation of both form and content. Sukasman designed *Wayang Ukur* not as a repetition of traditional *wayang*, but as a form of visual and narrative experimentation that reflects the shifting values of society.

In a society grappling with complex values resulting from globalization, capitalism, and technological disruption, the *Panakawan* figures emerge as both a reminder of cultural roots and a critique of contemporary social conditions. For example, criticism of economic inequality, environmental degradation, and social alienation is conveyed through the *Panakawan*'s signature humor—fresh, sharp, yet grounded. This demonstrates that long-standing values such as honesty, wisdom, and solidarity remain relevant, but must be reformulated to engage with today's generation effectively.

Wayang Ukur also creates a space for dialogue across generations and social classes. Its flexible and exploratory visual language enables audiences from diverse backgrounds to engage both emotionally and intellectually. Thus, *Wayang Ukur* not only preserves cultural values but also expands their reach through an innovative and contextual artistic approach.

Visual Analysis and Aesthetics of *Wayang Ukur*

Visually, *Wayang Ukur* harnesses the strength of engraved lines, coloration, and geometric forms to construct a symbolic system capable of communicating cultural values. The techniques of coloration and figure stylization create a visual language that is not only aesthetically pleasing but also communicative. For instance, the dominance of dark and light tones in *Semar* reflects the duality of life—simplicity and wisdom—while the large, expressive body form emphasizes the figure's dual role as both a spiritual and profane presence.

Through this visual approach, cultural messages are transmitted not solely through verbal or narrative means, but symbolically to the audience. As explained by Putrajip and Retnowati (2018), the use of virtual space in *Wayang Ukur* allows the audience to experience its symbolic dimension more immersively. This reinforces the role of aesthetics in shaping cultural understanding both emotionally and intellectually.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Wayang Ukur Panakawan*, as conceptualized by Sukasman, successfully integrates traditional cultural values into a contemporary artistic framework, thus fulfilling the initial expectations stated in the Introduction. By reinterpreting the *Panakawan* figures through innovative visual and narrative experimentation, *Wayang Ukur* not only preserves core values such as honesty, wisdom, and solidarity but also reformulates them to remain relevant amidst globalization, technological disruption, and shifting societal norms.

The *Results and Discussion* sections reveal that the visual aesthetics—characterized by engraved linework, dynamic coloration, and geometric stylization—serve as powerful symbolic tools for cultural communication. Moreover, the thematic emphasis on ethical production practices, moral heritage, and communal cooperation underscores the deep ethical dimension of this art form. These findings affirm that the transformation of *Wayang Ukur* has successfully maintained cultural continuity while fostering intergenerational and cross-class engagement, as anticipated in the research objectives.

From a developmental perspective, the research highlights promising avenues for expanding the reach of *Wayang Ukur* in both academic and practical domains. Future studies could explore its application in cultural education, digital media adaptation, and interdisciplinary performance studies. Additionally, its symbolic and ethical framework presents opportunities for fostering cultural diplomacy and promoting sustainable creative industries at both national and international levels

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